

Washington, DC -- U.S Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) announced today that he is a cosponsor of the Paycheck Fairness Act (H.R. 1339) to ensure that employers are held accountable to pay employees based on their work and productivity, not their gender.

“Fair pay is not just a women’s issue – unequal pay hurts families across the country,” **Arcuri said**

“This bill will help all working families – and especially the children of an increasing number of hard-working women who are the primary breadwinners in their family. Taking action to empower women in the work place will strengthen businesses and our economy.”

The Paycheck Fairness Act would ensure that women have access to the courts in the event of a pay discrimination case. H.R. 1339 would require the Department of Labor to enhance outreach and training efforts to work with employers to eliminate pay disparities, prohibit employers from retaliating against employees who share salary information with their co-workers, allow women to sue for punitive damages in addition to compensatory damages now available under the Equal Pay Act, and create a new grant program to help strengthen the negotiation skills of girls and women.

“In the 24th district, we know all about firsts in women’s history. The first Women’s Rights Convention was held in Seneca Falls in 1848 and was attended by three hundred women and men, true visionaries in gender equality, including Lucretia Mott and Frederick Douglass,” **said Arcuri**

. “We have come a long way from Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, but there is still much work to be done and I am proud to cosponsor this critical piece of legislation.”

H.R. 1336 is a response to the recent Supreme Court decision in Ledbetter v. Goodyear which made it harder for female workers to claim discrimination in pay. In a 5-to-4 decision, the court held that employees may not bring suit under the federal anti-discrimination law, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, unless they have filed a formal complaint with a federal agency within 180 days after their pay was set. The ruling ignores the fact that in most workplaces, employees are barred from sharing salary information, making it almost impossible for women workers to know whether their salary is indeed lower than their male counterparts.

Paychecks for women have declined by a total of \$928 over the last three years. Women, who

now more than ever provide for their families and create economic growth in Upstate New York, still make less than men. Thirty years ago, women earned 59 cents for every dollar a man earned. In 2006, the gap had improved, but women still earned only 77 cents for every dollar men earned. H.R. 1339 was introduced by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT).

Arcuri is also a cosponsor of H.R. 2 to increase the minimum wage after nearly a decade-long freeze. The bill, passed by the House, would raise the federal minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25 an hour, benefiting more than 7.6 million hard-working women. On July 24th, the first increase in the federal minimum wage was put into effect.

In the 110th Congress, Arcuri serves with a record number of women - 90 in the House and Senate - and with 6 female committee chairs. Arcuri serves on the House Rules Committee under the leadership of his fellow Upstate colleague from Rochester, Chairwoman Louise Slaughter – the first woman chair of the Rules Committee and a cosponsor of the Paycheck Fairness Act.

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